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- Your safety

## Your safety

**Last updated:** 9/11-2023

About Sweden – an orientation about Swedish society.

Print

This text is about your safety. It describes how to prevent accidents and what you should do in a serious emergency.

Among several other things, it also describes road safety, the importance of knowing how to swim and how to prepare for crisis situations.

The right to life, liberty and personal safety

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and personal safety. Everyone is entitled to live a life without violence, crime and harassment. This means that children must not have to worry about violence within the family, for example, that no women should have to suffer sexual abuse, and that elderly people should not have to be afraid of robberies and burglaries.

Swedish society is safe for most people. But not always. Crime does occur in Sweden just as it does in all other countries. No-one in Sweden should be scared of reporting a crime to the police, however. And a person who is suspected of a crime should know that the courts require convincing evidence before anyone is sentenced.

Crime is not prevented by the police alone. Homes, schools, workplaces, sports clubs and old friends need to help out.

## Emergency situations

### Emergency medical care

If you or someone else is very seriously ill or injured, you must seek help at an Akutmottagning, or Akuten for short. Hospitals have Akutmottagningar and these are open around the clock, every day of the year.

If you or someone else is feeling very mentally unwell and needs help quickly, you should go to an Akutmottagning for mental illness (psykiatrisk akutmottagning). You can call 1177 to find out where the nearest one is.

In an emergency situation where someone's life is in danger, call 112. You will quickly be given help and an ambulance will be sent to take the person to Akutmottagningen.

## **112 and 114 14**

Call 112 for an ambulance, the police, and the rescue services. Just dial 112, without prefixes or additional digits. Call 112 if:

- You witness a crime occurring.
- Someone has recently committed a crime against you.
- You need emergency help from the police or the ambulance or rescue services – if someone is seriously injured and needs medical care, for example.

Someone will always answer when you call 112, at any time of the day or night and throughout the year. The operator who answers speaks Swedish and English, and interpreters are also available. The operator will have several questions to ask you. They will ask you what has happened and if anyone is injured. You have to tell them where help is needed, who is calling, and from what number you are calling. You have to answer their questions in order for the right help to be sent to the right place, as quickly as possible.

If the situation is not an emergency, there is another number you can call the police.

Call 114 14 if:

- You want to report a crime which has occurred.
- You want to tip the police off about a crime.
- You want information about passports.
- You want addresses to the police.
- You want information about police opening times.

When you call 114 14, you reach a telephone answering service. It will ask you to record a message saying why you are calling. If you say "Anmälan" ("Report"), you will get to speak to a police operator. 114 14 is always open, every day and night of the year. The operator who answers speaks Swedish and English. Just dial 114 14, without prefixes or additional digits.

[Read more information about the police on their website.](#)

## **The Fire and Rescue Service**

The Fire and Rescue Service put out fires and provide help in the event of accidents on the road and at sea. The Fire and Rescue Service also work to prevent fires. For example, they can describe how fire alarms and fire extinguishers work. The fire and rescue service is also called the fire brigade and belongs to the municipality.

The most important is that you call 112 when you see a fire! You have to describe what has happened and what damage you can see. You also have to provide the address and where help is needed and say who you are.

Questions to think about

Do people trust the police in the country or countries where you lived previously?

Do you think people trust the police in Sweden?

## **Preventing accidents**

Safety for children

A home should be a safe and secure place for everyone who lives there, adults as well as children. But homes do have dangers too, perhaps for children in particular. If you have small children living in your home, it is important that you make it safe for them. Store all medication, detergents, small batteries and other things that can cause poisoning and injury in such a way that children cannot get to them.

Children search their environment with curiosity but without being conscious of all the risks which exist around them.

[The Swedish Consumer Agency's brochure "Safe children – secure parents" has more information about safety for small children.](#)

[Read more about children's safety on the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency's website \(Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, MSB\).](#)

## Fire safety

A fire can spread very quickly. An entire room can become engulfed in flames in five minutes. The most important factor in being able to put out a fire is discovering it in time.

Never store flammable liquids and gases at home. Never leave candles unmonitored.

### Smoke detectors

Smoke detectors are devices that sense the presence of smoke and can therefore warn you when a fire starts. Smoke detectors save many lives every year. Smoke detectors must be mounted on the ceiling. Check that they are working by pressing the Test button once a month. Smoke can poison you so that you do not wake up. But a smoke detector wails loudly and wakes you up.

### Fire extinguishers and fire blankets

You can put out small fires yourself using a fire extinguisher and a fire blanket. Keep them in a place where they are easily accessible and work out how to use them. There is no time to do that when a fire is already burning.

### Cooker top fire

Many fires start on top of the cooker. It is easy to forget that you left a hotplate on. If a pot or frying pan catches fire, you have to smother the fire with a lid or a fire blanket. Do not pour water on a pot or frying pan if fat or oil is burning in it – that will make the fire worse.

A cooker guard is a device that can turn off the electricity and sound an alarm if there is a risk of a cooker top fire. You need permission from the owner of the property to install a cooker guard.

### What to do in the event of a fire

- **Rescue** – Rescue people who are in danger, but do not take risks. Remember that smoke is poisonous. Crawl along the floor to get out. Close windows and doors.
- **Warn** – Warn those who are threatened by the fire.
- **Raise the alarm** – Activate the fire alarm if there is one and call 112 from a safe place. Meet the Fire and Rescue Service when they arrive.
- **Extinguish** – If you have a fire extinguisher, you can begin putting out the fire. Point the fire extinguisher at the embers – not at the flames.

## Road safety

The goal for road safety in Sweden is that no-one should be killed or seriously injured in road accidents. This goal is known as Vision Zero (Nollvisionen). But in order for that to be achieved, we all have to follow traffic regulations and show consideration for other road users. That is why you must not drive faster than the speed limit. You are not allowed to drive if you have drunk alcohol. There are also some types of medication you are not allowed to take if you are going to drive. And you are not allowed to use your mobile phone while driving.

In Sweden there is a law which says that everyone who rides in a car must use a seatbelt, both in the front seat and in the back seat. Children who are shorter than 135 centimetres must in addition use a special protective device, a baby protector, baby car chair, or a belted chair/cushion.

### Cyclists and pedestrians

There are traffic regulations for cyclists and pedestrians too. A bicycle has to have a light, reflectors, and brakes. All cyclists under the age of 15 have to use a cycle helmet. The police can fine you if you have a child on the back of your bike who is not wearing a helmet. You have to cycle on the right side of the road, and you are not allowed to cycle on pedestrian paths.

You have to walk on pedestrian paths or roadside pavements if they exist. If there is no pedestrian path or pavement, you should preferably walk along the left side of the road. Use reflectors if it is dark.

[Read more on the Swedish Transport Agency's website about Vision Zero and regulations for pedestrians, wheelchair users, and cyclists.](#)

## **Driving licence and insurance**

You have to have an approved driving licence in order to be allowed to drive a car in Sweden. You have to be 18 years old to get a driving licence. Foreign driving licences may be approved – check with the Swedish Transport Agency.

If you own a car you, have to have third-party insurance (trafikförsäkring) for it. You are not allowed to drive an uninsured car.

## **Videos about road safety**

NTF Säker Trafik has several videos about road safety. These videos are in easy Swedish.

### **Cykla säkert (Cycle safely)**

### **Synas i mörker (Remaining visible after dark)**

### **Nykter trafik (Sober driving)**

## **Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)**

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation is a manual method for restoring the heartbeat and breathing of a person in cardiac arrest. Before beginning to administer CPR, you have to check whether the person is conscious and breathing. If the person is unconscious and not breathing, you have to call 112 and then begin CPR. The 112 operator can give you advice on how to administer CPR.

The CPR procedure involves pressing down hard on the chest of the unconscious person 30 times and then blowing air into their mouth twice. This procedure is repeated until an ambulance arrives.

External defibrillators are available in many locations. They are devices that give an electric shock to someone in cardiac arrest in order to restore the heartbeat. Anyone can use an external defibrillator – you do not have to have medical training to use one.

Note that this advice applies to CPR on adults. CPR is not done in the same way on children. The Swedish Resuscitation Council (HLR-rådet) has a website with more information about CPR and videos of how to administer CPR on adults as well as children of different ages.

[Read more about CPR and watch instruction videos on the Swedish Resuscitation Council's website.](#)

In order to feel confident about administering CPR, you need to practise. There are courses you can attend. The Swedish Resuscitation Council's website lists where these are given.

[Read more on the Swedish Resuscitation Council's website about how you can attend CPR courses.](#)

## **Knowing how to swim**

If you can swim, you can save lives – your own as well as others'. But that is not the only reason it is good to know how to swim. Sweden has a long coastline and almost 100,000 lakes. Many outdoor activities are related to water, all year round. In the winter, you can go skating on the ice if it is thick enough, and in the summer, many people go boating and swimming.

[The Swedish Life Saving Society \(Svenska livräddningssällskapet\) has a website where you can read more about what to think about when you go swimming, ride in a boat, or walk or skate on the ice.](#)

It is important for children to learn to swim as early as possible. Children have to be able to swim 200 metres, of which 50 metres using the backstroke, in order to pass the Sports and Health subject in Year 6.

It is common in Sweden for children to take swimming lessons. But it is just as important for adults to know how to swim. Lessons are available for children as well as adults in most municipalities.

It is important to wear a life vest when you go boating – adults as well as children. Children should also wear a life vest when they are near water, as in playing on the beach or jetty.

But there are dangers at home too. A couple of centimetres of water in a bathtub or play pool can be enough for a small child to drown. Stay close enough to the child so that you can always reach out and grab them. As an adult, you are responsible for your child at all times. Never take your eyes off your child when they are playing near the water. Drowning happens quickly and often silently.

If you do not have a life vest, you can usually rent one from the municipality or borrow one from a life vest depot.

[Find your nearest life vest depot on the Swedish Life Saving Society's website.](#)

Questions to think about

Where and how are you allowed to light fires outdoors?

Where is it dangerous, and illegal, to light a fire outdoors?

Have you got a driving licence from another country? Do you know what rules apply in your case?

Do you want to get a driving licence in Sweden? What do you need to do to get a driving licence?

Where are swimming lessons given in your area?

What are you closest to if you want swim: a lake, the sea, or a swimming pool?

Interview with Jacob, a firefighter

Photo: The Fire and Rescue Service for Greater Gothenburg

### **How quickly can the rescue services get to an accident or a fire?**

That depends. Fires and accidents happen in different places, some closer, some farther away. Sometimes there is a lot of traffic. In the winter, there may be snow or ice. We try to get there as quickly as possible, but we always have to drive safely.

When the alarm goes off at the fire station, the fire engine has to leave the station within 90 seconds. In that time, we have to get our kit on and board the fire engine. It does not matter if we are having a meal, training, or if we are in the toilet – we have to be ready in 90 seconds.

### **What training programme do you have to do to become a firefighter?**

It is called **Protection Against Accidents (Skydd Mot Olyckor)**. It is a two-year programme offered in two places in Sweden, at Sandö and Revinge.

### **Do firefighters have to live near the fire station?**

That depends. If you work full-time as a firefighter, you do not have to live near the fire station. Firefighters work in shifts. That means there are always firefighters at the fire station, around the clock. So on your days off, you are completely free.

You can also work as an on-call firefighter. That means you can be called in to work at any time and you have to go to the fire station immediately. So if you work as an on-call firefighter, you have to live and work near the fire station.

### **Does the tanker's tank only contain water?**

Usually it is only water, though some tankers have foam mixed into the water. Foam is needed to put out some fires.

### **Who is responsible for ensuring that people have fire extinguishers and smoke detectors in their homes?**

It is a legal requirement for all homes to have smoke detectors, and the owner of the property is responsible for buying and installing them.

Fire extinguishers are a recommendation, and it is the person living in the home who has to buy them.

## **Emergency preparedness and response**

Sweden has not been at war for more than 200 years, but that does not mean it will never happen here again. And there are other crises that can happen in a country.

What would you do if water stopped coming out of the taps and food in the shops ran out? Or if the power was suddenly cut? Are you prepared for a situation like that? Think about what you would need to do in order to manage on your own in your home, without power or water, for a few days. Have you got what you need, or is there something you need to buy?

When a crisis strikes and there is unrest in society, a lot of information gets spread. But not all of it is true. There are people who want to spread false information. Think about who is the sender of the information and if you can trust them. Reliable news sources include the major daily newspapers, Radio Sweden (Sveriges Radio), SVT (Sveriges Television), and the krisinformation.se website.

If you would like to know more about how you can prepare for a crisis or war, you can visit the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency's website (Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, MSB). There is also a brochure called **If Crisis of War Comes**. It is available in several languages and can be ordered by post to your home at no cost.

[Krisinformation.se publishes information and notices from government agencies when a crisis or serious incident occurs.](#)

[Read more about how you can prepare for a crisis on MSB's website.](#)

[Read the brochure "If Crisis or War Comes" on Krisinformation.se.](#)

## **Prepare for power cuts and heating cuts**

Longer-lasting power cuts or heating cuts are rare in Sweden, but you need to be prepared for the possibility of them. They can be particularly difficult during the winter, when it is cold and dark.

Major power cuts don't just affect lighting and electronics in your home. Sometimes they also impact heating, the water supply, telecommunications and payments systems. It is therefore a good idea to be prepared before the power goes.

There are a few things it is a good idea to have at home, including:

- A torch
- Batteries
- Wax candles
- Matches or a lighter
- Large water bottles full of water
- Things to keep you warm, for example, sleeping bags, blankets, ground sheets and warm clothes
- Food that does not need to be kept in the fridge or freezer and that you can eat straight away or cook without water, for example, tinned food
- Hygiene articles such as wet wipes, hand sanitiser, nappies and menstrual pads
- Home pharmacy with, for example, a first aid kit, important medication and a thermometer
- A battery-powered radio, wind-up radio or solar cell radio
- Cash
- Power bank for mobile phones
- A list of important phone numbers to family members, neighbours, hospitals, the municipality, the rescue service, and your electricity provider
- Camping stove and utensils (use outdoors if possible)
- Oil lamp and fuel, for example, lamp oil or paraffin. Make sure there is good ventilation in the space where you use it.
- Alternative heater that runs on, for example, paraffin or butane gas

[Read more on the Swedish Energy Agency's website about how to prepare for power cuts.](#)

## **113 13**

113 13 is Sweden's national information line. You can call 113 13 if you want information about crises or incidents, for example, energy crises, major storms, floods or disease outbreaks. You can also call about serious accidents, for example, major traffic accidents or fires.

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